

Interview With Clayton Horton  
in Eastham, Massachusetts

by Vivian Andrist  
September 28, 1981

Q: This is an interview with Clayton Horton, as part of the Oral History Project of the Eastham Historical Society. The date is September 28, 1981. We're in Mr. Horton's very, very pleasant house in Eastham and the interviewer is Vivian Andrist.

Mr. Horton, let's start off with when and where you were born.

Clayton Horton: I was born in Eastham, December 11th, 1901.

Q: You are a real Caper.

Clayton Horton: That's what they tell me. They told me I'm a real Caper. And I'm the seventh blessed event in our family, and as far as I know there was no problem. (Laughter) That's all I can say about that.

Q: You were born at home?

Clayton Horton: As far as I know.

Q: Any little stories about that birth?

Clayton Horton: Well, they tell me that my aunt named me.

Q: Clayton?

Horton: That's right. It isn't a very common name. You don't see it around much. So that's about all I can think about along that line.

Q: Do you have any idea where she got the name Clayton?

Horton: No, I don't. She traveled a lot. Whether she saw somebody by the name Clayton---

Q: Maybe it was an old beau.

Horton: Well, it could be, you know. Most of those old Hortons had quite a few beaux!

Q: Pretty attractive girls?

Horton: So they tell me. That's all I know. (Laughter)

Q: Tell me about your father. Was he born on the Cape too?  
Where did he come from?

Horton: Yes, my father and mother both were born on the Cape. My mother in Eastham. She was a Knowles, and I didn't know anything of her folks really. The Knowles are big in Eastham. They're scattered all over the Cape and Eastham and everywhere. My father was born in Eastham. And I remember him, of course, and I don't remember my grandfather.

Q: Your father's father?

Horton: My father's father. He died on the floor of the Legislature in Boston. He was up there.

Q: Do you know the date of that?

Horton: No, I'm not sure. I never knew him. I knew my grandmother for a few years. I never knew him.

Q: Your grandfather, was he Representative from this District?

Horton: He must have been. I knew he died in the Legislature up there. I've heard my aunts and uncles tell about him. And they took him out to Reading, where he was boarding at the time.

Q: What was it, a heart attack?

Horton: I don't know. I really don't know.

Q: What was his name?

Horton: His name was Isaiah Horton. There are three Isaiah Hortons. He was a Captain Isaiah Horton, this one that died in the Legislature.

Q: Captain of what?

Horton: Well, he had what they call packets and it was based in Wellfleet. They were like small schooners, that used to take passengers from a place like Rock Harbor, a place like Wellfleet, to Boston and down the Maritime Provinces. Well, it was really a little trading schooner, you know, picking up everywhere they

could make a dollar, going either way.

Q: Well, then, his family. How far back did his family go on the Cape? Was he one of the original settlers?

Horton: No, he wasn't. The Hortons were latecomers on the Cape. They were not some of the early ones. But they trace back. I have the genealogy out there. They trace back to the Knowles, to some of the early settlers.

Q: Yes, I was sure of that. I've run into that over and over again. What do you remember about your mother's family in particular? You never knew the grandparents then?

Horton: I never knew the grandparents. I never knew my mother's family. I knew my father's family. You see, my father died when I must have been about ten years old. And I never really knew my mother's family. I knew where the people used to point out where Mother was born, which was right up there on Route 6 on the left.

Q: In an old Knowles house, was it?

Horton: That's right. Next to where you leave one of the--

Q: Sherman?

Horton: Yes, that's right. Before you get to that.

Q: Is the house still standing?

Horton: Still there. Still occupied.

Horton: I'm not sure about that.

Q: Let's go on to your brothers and sisters. Let's start with the oldest.

Horton: Well, there were five boys and two girls in our family. The oldest was Walter, who, as far as I know, never left the Cape. He loved the Cape.

Q: What did he do?

Horton: He was a farmer, and he used to be interested in race horses. They used to have a trotting park down at my grandfather's place in North Eastham. They used to try out the steeds, you know. Of course, quite a lot of activity went on in those places<sup>at</sup>/that time. (Laughter)

Q: Do you remember what road the house was on?

Horton: Sure. You mean my grandfather's house? Sure, it's right across, diagonally across from where the nursery building is down there now, where they sell plants and so forth.

Q: On Route 6?

Horton: On Route 6 in North Eastham.

Q: They have a motel or cottages to rent. Was that part of his farm?

Horton: That was part of his farm, and the racetrack used to be in back of that little bunch of buildings.

Q: Was it just his racetrack, or Eastham's racetrack, or what went on?

Horton: It was his racetrack. But a lot of the farmers used to come there and race their horses around, you know. Most every farmer then had their workhorses, and they had what they call their driving horses, which they gave special attention to, of course.

Q: That must have been fun. Did you go to those?

Horton: No, that was before my time.

Q: Well, now, Walter's the oldest, so who was the second child?

Horton: We had a girl named Sophronia.

Q: Was there some reason to name her that? After somebody?

Horton: I don't know. I never found the name anywhere.

Q: It's different.

Horton/ I've looked in the Bibles. I've looked in different books, you know, and I've never found the name anywhere. We always called her Phonie. She was the oldest girl. And when she graduated from school at seven teen years of age, high school, that fall she went right to work teaching school, right from the high school. Then they didn't have to-- I wouldn't say it wasn't necessary-- they didn't have to train in college like they do now. And she went to teach in a little town in the western part of the state by the name of Hardwick. Seventy percent of the people were

Q: It must have produced some problems.

Horton: And she took me with her and she went up there. Probably the School Committee picked out a house for her, and I went to live with her. Two years. Of course I was small and just going to school, see? And I can remember the children coming to school couldn't speak English. She had to study the Polish grammar at night, so she could talk to the Polish children next day. And so forth. On top of that she had me on her hands. (Laughter)

Q: How old were you?

Horton: Well, I must have been six, seven or eight years old. Something like that, when I lived with her two years there.

Q: How did that happen? Was there no school here?

Horton: Yes, but we were a big family and my father had died. My older brother was out on his own and that left five of us, and it was just too much for my mother. There was no-- I mean, you couldn't go to Town Hall and get your groceries there like you can now, in some cases. We were a poor family. So that's how I happened to go and live with her.

Q: What an interesting experience for you.

Horton: It worked out good. It worked out good.

Q: Who was your third oldest?

Horton: My third oldest was another sister by the name of Bessie,

who always lived locally. She used to keep house for people, different ones that hired housekeepers. And one time she kept house for Mr. Mayer, who was president of Singer Sewing Machine, in Orleans. He had a summer place there. And she finally married, but she didn't get any farther off the Cape than Orleans. She married an Orleans man. (Laughter)

Q: All the Hortons like the Cape. Did Phonie get married?

Horton: Yes, she did. And stayed in the western part of the state. Met a Mr. Johnson and they seemed to hit it off pretty good, so that was a result of it. They got married.

Q: Not a-- ?

Horton: No, he wasn't Polish.

Q: Then you had Number Four.

Horton: The next oldest was a brother who I remember. And he was a fisherman, lost at sea. But they recovered his body. They found it finally. My next oldest brother was Earl, who made a career of the Army. He was in the First World War. He was in the Army when World War I started.

Q: Regular Army?

Horton: Regular Army. And, of course, he was one of the first ones shipped, because he was already in the Army and been in there-- I don't know-- some two, three years, something like that.



He was gassed in the First World War. And when he came home he was in the construction business as long as he was able to work. He's still alive, living in Maine.

Q: Oh, is he?

Horton: Yes. He's eighty-- I think he's eighty-six, eighty-seven.

Q: Did he have any stories to tell about World War One?

Horton: He didn't have anything to say about it. I didn't know anything about it until I got a read in the-- that's how closed-mouthed he was-- I didn't know anything about it until I got a read in Mrs. Lowe's History of Eastham. And in there it told about the Purple Heart and the different clusters that they set up and so forth, but he would never say anything about it. And I've never seen them. He would never show them to anybody.

Q: I'll be darned. I wonder why.

Horton: Well, personally I have an idea-- that he would never go again for some reason or another. I mean, he went through all the different battles then, because he was one of the first ones there. That's just a personal opinion.

Q: Right.

Horton: But you don't say, "how do you know?"

Q: That's right. (Laughter) Then what's your next one?

Horton: Then I had another one. Whitman, like I said, I

understand he died with pneumonia quite young. Of course, I'm the next one.

Q: And you're the next one!

Horton: And I'm still around. (Laughter)

Q: You certainly are! Okay now, what was it like around here when you were growing up? Was it mostly farming country or what was the situation?

Horton: Well, it was strictly a farming and fishing community. Tourist business never got started until, oh, I would guess 1940 or something like that. It was strictly a farming and fishing community.

Q: And your family were farmers?

Horton: That's right. Farmers and fishermen both. Farming and fishing went together with our place.

Q: After you came back from Hardwick, where did you go to school? Let's start with your schooling.

Horton: I went to school in Eastham.

Q: To the little schoolhouse up there? Our museum?

Horton: That's right. That's one of them I went to in Eastham. There used to be three, you know, at one time. I went through the whole three of them and then I went <sup>to</sup> Orleans to high school. And I graduated from Orleans High School when I was seventeen.

Q: And what date was that? Do you remember?

Horton: 1918. Around 1918, I guess, unless my figuring is wrong. And in 1918 influenza was everywhere. You must have heard about that.

Q: Oh, yes.

Horton: And schools were closed. I had one year to finish and we really didn't finish the school year. We went back and they had sessions a while and they gave pupils tests to see if they would pass. If they lengthened it out, the full school year, it would run into the next school year, and they didn't want to do that, so they gave us tests and I got my diploma.

Q: And then what?

Horton: Well, that was-- ever hear about the Boston police strike?

Q: You bet.

Horton: I joined the National Guard at seventeen and went on duty in the Boston police strike.

Q: My heavens! The mayor-- it was Coolidge?

Horton: Coolidge was Governor. I happened to be on the Number One Squad, and the Number One Squad was Coolidge's escort, and each morning we had to go in and get our orders, you might say. And I don't think I ever heard him speak more than half a dozen times. (Laughter) Somebody asked him-- not anybody in the National

Guard, but somebody on the floor-- asked him what he was going to do and how he was going to handle the strike. He says, "No problem." That's about all he said. As far as I remember, he never enlarged on it. And those policemen, well, none of them got their job back. Every one of them was fired.

Q: Sort of like your air controllers now.

Horton: I was up there about pretty near a month, two months.

Q: Was there violence?

Horton: Yes.

Q: Were you involved in it?

Horton: Yes, but we went out two by two's. Nobody went out alone. Most of the trouble was the ex-policemen. They're the ones. The police that struck were most of the trouble. We saw some violence-- looting and, well, we saw some people killed and so forth.

Q: Did you stay in the National Guard?

Horton: No. I got discharged because I was under age. (Laughter) After the trouble was all over, they started going through the names, you know. You see, this was the Home Guard then. This was the start of the National Guard. And when they started going over the names, when the trouble was all over, I got my discharge, honorable discharge, because I was a student and under age.

Q: They didn't know when you joined that you were-- ?

Horton: Yes, but they wanted somebody to go to work. You know, under some conditions they overlooked some things.

Q: Yes, I suppose. Sure.

Horton: Sure, that's the way it worked out.

Q: So back home you went?

Horton: My mother had passed away then. And I went in the Coast Guard. Cook in the Coast Guard for two years. Right here in Eastham, under Captain Walker.

Q: Were you on a boat?

Horton: No, at the station.

Q: Where? Down here at the Coast Guard beach?

Horton: Here in Eastham. Not the station that's there now. One that was standing way down over the beach. It's all washed away, the station that was there when I was there.

Q: You were about eighteen then?

Horton: I must have been eighteen or nineteen, the years I was in the Coast Guard Station.

Q: How did you get trained to be a cook?

Horton: Well, they used to take turns cooking. And a man had left and it was his turn to cook, and I took his place. A lot of the

to cook, they'd ask me if I would cook for them. And I stayed right on cooking, one right after the other. Not doing the baking, just the cooking. Mr. Crosby used to do most of the baking. And, well, I stayed on two years and then they tried to get me to sign up permanent, you see, and they told me that in twenty years in the Coast Guard you can retire. Well, twenty years looked a long way off to me on the beach. (Laughter) So I didn't sign up as a regular. And from there I got into the construction business.

Q: Did you set up your own business?

Horton: Well, I worked for other people about ten years then, or twelve years, and by that time I was getting-- well, you see, I was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight. Then I went into business for myself. Got married then.

Q: When you were twenty-seven or twenty-eight?

Horton: I was twenty-seven when I got married.

Q: Let's go back to the tour of duty you had there. While you were there, were there any shipwrecks or life-saving activities that Eastham men were involved in?

Horton: Nothing but small boats. The big windjammers were out then. And the sailing boats were on the way out, the schooners. But there were some small fishing vessels that used to get into trouble once in a while. And the cook, you know, he had to take boat drill and everything like that and pass all the tests. But

in an emergency the cook stayed in the station. He didn't go. Because he had to keep the coffeepot on for anybody who'd show up. He had to answer the phone. He was officer in charge when people were out. But there were no-- except for one or two swordfishermen that I can think of that run too close to shore, in small boats like thos, that sort of thing. In other words, the Coast Guard as Coast Guard was on the way out. As far as the stations and that sort of thing was concerned.

Q: This was during the time of Prohibition?

Horton: Right.

Q: Any rum-running stories?

Horton: About Prohibition? Well, we didn't run into any-- well, Prohibition was after that.

Q: It was 1919.

Horton: Was it?

Q: Or was it '20? It seems to me the Volstead Act was in 1919, but I may be wrong.

Horton: I think that Prohibition was after that. But you asked about it. I think it made a few millionaires on the Cape.

Q: Did it? Can you talk about it?

Horton: No, I guess I won't get involved in that. (Laughter)

Q: It's funny how few people want to name names or anything like that. But I'm sure there must have been a lot of Cape men who, as you say, made a lot of money.

Horton: I'm sure there were. Fact is, I know one of them. Paid me a debt he owed me. He said, "I found this on the beach last night." Boat had run ashore and gone aground. And when they'd run ashore and get aground they'd throw cargo over, you see. They didn't want to get caught with it. And then that would lighten the boat, so they could get off. And different times they were picking it up along off the beach.

Q: Most of the times these were fishermen who lived on the Cape? In the rum-running business?

Horton: Oh, no! There was folks that'd never run a boat before had one when this was coming.

Q: Really? (Laughter)

Horton: Oh, sure.

Q: Well, it's an ideal place for it.

Horton: That's right. I mean, they couldn't patrol the whole coast, both sides.

Q: Of course not. Absolutely-- it was a silly law anyway.

Horton: I guess so. I mean, they couldn't enforce it.

Q: That's right. Now did you...



got into the construction business, you stayed there the rest of your life, did you?

Horton: Well, it's not all my life yet, but I'm working on it.  
(Laughter)

Q: You're still in the construction business?

Horton: No! No! I haven't worked all of my life yet in this.  
(Laughter)

Q: I guess you haven't. How has the Cape changed in your lifetime?

Horton: Well, it's changed from-- let's see, I wrote that down somewhere. It has changed from sand roads, outdoor plumbing, farming and fishing-- those are some of the early things-- it's changed now to blacktop roads, parking lots (which is where you see the big stores), and a lot more tension than there was when I was growing up.

Q: Where do you see it headed?

Horton: I don't know.

Q: That's a hard one to answer, isn't it?

Horton: How far can inflation go?

Q: And how many tourists can you accommodate?

Horton: Well, I see a lot more trouble now than you used to see when I was a young man growing up. And I'm not talking when I

was a little kid. I'm talking when I was married. I was married in the Depression, in '28. And in the thirties they really had a Depression. But we looked out for one another.

Q: That's one of the questions I was going to ask you. How the Depression affected you as a person, and the Cape. Do you remember the Crash?

Horton: Oh, sure. I remember the bank holidays and all those things. The bank holidays-- the only people that had any money were a few Italians and Portuguese people around, because they didn't place too much-- well, they were leery of the banks, so they kept their money at home. And when it came to the bank holiday, they had some. Nobody else had any.

Q: I'll be darned. And you were in the middle of the construction business?

Horton: Right. Well, I was in it, yes, at that time. You see, I was about twenty-eight or twenty-nine. Building and everything let up, you know, because-- well, nobody had any money. But there was no poverty. Like there would be now. When families are out of work for a month or two or even a few weeks, they're screaming for help. You didn't have that then.

Q: How did you manage?

Horton: Well, my wife was teaching school. She was bringing in eight hundred dollars a year. The principal was getting a thousand,

in Orleans. That was the period of the CCC camps. You probably heard of those. I got a job working for the CCC camp people. I got laid off after three days, because they found out my wife was making eight hundred a year, and that's all they needed. That's the reason I got laid off. That shows you.

As far as how did it affect people? The Selectman in town, a man who had a general store-- and I think he was Postmaster then-- were working on the WPA projects. You heard of those. But I couldn't get a job on them because my wife was making eight hundred dollars a year. I was well off! (Laughter)

Q: Let's talk about your wife. What was her name?

Horton: She was a native Easthammer. Her name was Nickerson, Virginia Nickerson.

Q: Any relation to Otto?

Horton: No, no relation to Otto. And no relation to the Nickersons who have the big anniversary in Chatham every year. No relation to the William Nickersons, or those. Just a Nickerson. And people ask me if I was related to the Nickersons any way and so forth. Well, all I can tell them is that I was what they call a shirttail Nickerson. I married one of them. (Laughter)

Q: Well, that's combining two great Cape families, Nickersons and Hortons. She was born here on the Cape in Eastham?

Horton: Yes. Samoset Road.

Q: And she was a teacher? Was there anything else-- how did you meet her?

Horton: Oh, I went to school with her, but I never really paid much attention to her. She was kind of short, you know, and stocky. (Laughter) And I didn't pay much attention to her when I was going to school. Then she went away to college, graduated from Bridgewater State College. She was very active in the 4-H Club work. She taught basket-making-- hand basket-making and caning chairs. The 4-Her's, you know. She was very active. She was in that quite a few years. That was in conjunction with her teaching at school, you know.

Q: What grade did she teach?

Horton: Fourth and Fifth mostly. Except a short stint she did at a state school, which she couldn't stand. She couldn't stand that. So she came home and came to Eastham and she wasn't here very long and they asked her to teach. And by the way, when we were married, she gave up teaching. We decided we'd like to have about three children-- have a family of about three children, and we were home two to three months and the principal called her to see if she would substitute for a few days. Well, she went back as a substitute, but she taught twenty-one years as a result of that, in Eastham. So that's where our family went. And during the Depression that eight hundred dollars come in pretty good!

Q: I'll bet it did. You did have children? Or you did not have children?

Horton: No children.

Q: Tell me about your wedding. Where was it and so forth?

Horton: Well, it was October 1928. It was on Samoset Road, in that little church they had down there on the right.

Q: In the Chapel in the Pines?

Horton: In the Chapel in the Pines.

Q: Oh, our daughter was married there too.

Horton: And as far as I know, it went along about like weddings did. Some were nervous and some weren't. (Laughter)

Q: Mostly family?

Horton: Oh, there was a big crowd there. Out in the street. It was a beautiful day, beautiful day. There was a big crowd.

Q: Did you go on a honeymoon?

Horton: Yes. Went on a honeymoon to Franklin, New Hampshire, and the reason we went to Franklin, New Hampshire, a Mr. Gill, who used to live in town, Mr. George Gill, moved up there, and he bought a place, lot of trees on it. And he set up a sawmill on it, on Webster Lake, in New Hampshire. He built cottages and started renting them to people. And I was friendly with his son, Edward Gill, and when he found out we were married, he got in touch with us and told us we could use it, the cottage, as long as we

wanted to, while we were on our honeymoon. He gave us a present of that.

Q: Where did you first live after you were married?

Horton: You know where Vautrinot's real estate place is?

Q: Yes.

Horton: I built that house and lived there along two years before I married. And when we were married, I took my wife over the threshold in there.

Q: Carried her in?

Horton: Carried her in.

Q: How romantic. (Laughter)

Horton: I lived there two years alone.

Q: You did? Well, then did you stay-- that was where you lived with your wife?

Horton: We lived there until '49. And I bought this property around here. Sold that house in '48. In '48 bought this property. Got it so we could live in it. An old house over there in '49, and I built every house around here. And lived in four of them.

Q: What did you do? Build one and live in it until you'd sell it?

Horton: Well, at first we lived in it. ...

what we call the old place, and lived in that two or three years. Well, no, lived in that nineteen years. Built the other cottages and run the tourist business. We used to have cottages. And moved that house over there from Orleans. Built this one across the street. Built the last one eleven, ten years ago, where we are, where I am now-- the last one I built.

Q: When did your wife pass away?

Horton: It will be five years December twenty-sixth.

Q: Was she ill?

Horton: Well, she was in failing health about two years, but only in the hospital ten days. So I got a lot to be thankful for.

Q: I know. Was there a mentor in your life? Here comes that word.  
(Laughter)

Horton: Well, I looked that up.

Q: Somebody that you patterned your own career after in life?

Horton: Well, what do I say to that? Not my oldest brother, but the two next ones and my mother were my advisors, we'll say, up until I was seventeen, when my mother died. And then from seventeen on, I've been on my own.

Q: Was there a teacher you particularly liked?

Horton: In school?

Q: Yes. That you respected, followed?

Horton: When you say a teacher I liked-- in what respect?

Q: Somebody you thought--

Horton: Looked up to?

Q: Yes.

Horton: Well, I got to admit, I liked them all. (Laughter)

Q: That's good. In other words, you liked school?

Horton: Sure I liked school. Especially mathematics. Yes, I looked up to all my teachers as far as I know. There wasn't a teacher I didn't like. I can't think of any teacher I didn't like.

Q: What kind of little boy were you? Were you a rascal?

Horton: I'm sure I was a good little boy.

Q: You're sure?

Horton: I'm sure. (Laughter)

Q: Well, that's good.

Horton: You can take that for what it's worth.

Q: That's right. (Laughter) Now we come to the Second World War. We discussed the Crash and the Depression somewhat. And the Second World War-- do you remember December 7th and the reaction?



Horton: Sure. I was in Eastham. And I didn't know anything about the bombing of Pearl Harbor-- that's the Second World War-- until I stopped in the little store down where Whispering Pines Garage is now. Used to be a little store there. I think Mr. Forrest run it, a grocery store, and he had a little, small gas station. Went in there to buy something, I don't remember what. And I thought people were-- oh, there were a dozen men or so coming in off the street. I mean, they were talking about something, clustered together. And that's the first I knew about Pearl Harbor. Finally they had the information that twelve hundred men were lost on the Arizona or something like that. I was too old by then to go in the service, second World War. There was a pretty sad thing around town.

Q: Was it?

Horton: And myself included. I wondered why the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. I mean, were they aggravated about something? And finally, I guess-- well, why they bombed Pearl Harbor I don't know.

Q: From what I've read, what I can gather, they feared our dominance in southeast Asia and the Pacific. They wanted to claim this as their own, their own territory. But why they came-- I suppose they had to destroy our fleet.

Horton: I think that there was a question that they were aggravated about, to do it.

Q: You mean a political-- ?

Horton: That's right.

Q: Yes. Well, the answer must be in some book.

Horton: And was it to step up the economy in the country?

Q: You mean a deliberate act?

Horton: Yes.

Q: Well, it certainly did that for a while, didn't it?

Horton: Yes. I mean, that's a question in my mind.

Q: But you may never have the answer. (Laughter) So then people went on rationing here, right?

Horton: That's right.

Q: And you had stamps for food?

Horton: Well, I didn't ever have any stamps, but some people did.

Q: Did it affect your life here particularly, World War II? There were a lot of boys from Eastham who must have gone.

Horton: Yes, there were. But, you see, I was too old. They wouldn't accept me, of course. And it took a lot of boys. Of course, people were in the Merchant Marine, not only in the field fighting. But there were a lot of <sup>local</sup> people in the Merchant Marine. Transport business and like that, you know. And economically, times were a little better during the war. You know, there was

more money around because of the war. The shipyards were going and the factories away were going. And, of course, that all affects the economy.

Q: Wasn't there a German submarine that was grounded? Or--

Horton: Oh, Second World War. Sure. I could tell you about that day. That was a Sunday, and I was-- no, sorry, I'm wrong on that. That was the First World War. I'm not sure about the submarine being grounded, I'm not sure about it. There was one here, but I don't think it was a German one. I think it was one of our's that was grounded.

Q: Was it? I sort of get little stories from people about the submarine and I haven't been able to track it down yet. I wondered if you heard about it.

Horton: No, I didn't know too much about that. I couldn't give you any information on that, I'm sure.

Q: Let's go way back to your family. What part did religion play? Did your family go to church? Say grace at meals, that sort of thing?

Horton: We said grace at meals and we all had to be at the table at the same time when the meal was ready. They wouldn't want them coming in this way, you know. The hired men were there too. The hired men were generally there. We said grace at meals. We went to the Methodist Church fairly regular. I won't say we went every Sunday. We went fairly regular. Probably my mother went more

regular than anyone else. Now you want to know what part it played in my life. Well, after I was married we used to go the church fairly regular, the Methodist Church. And I think I can safely say that I held practically every position in the church except preaching. All the committees and so forth. Up until about 1970, and then I broke away from the Methodist Church.

Q: You want to say why?

Horton: Well, I started to ask a few questions. I started to read religious history. And I wish the minister was alive to hear what I'm going to say, so to see what his rebuttal would be. But one Sunday we went to church, my wife and I. This is, well, not later than 1970, right around there. And the minister preached a sermon on the garbage strike in New York City. Garbage-- they were on strike then. And he made quite a talk about that. You can call it a sermon if you want to.

And we came home, sat down in the living room, didn't say much of anything. Finally my wife said, "What did you think of that sermon?" Well, we couldn't correlate it with the Bible.

The next Sunday it was on the qualifications of a certain man to be Governor of New York State. And we came home, sat around a bit, my wife wondered-- well, she broached the subject-- "Well, what did you think of that sermon?"

Well, we stayed home two years. Didn't go to church two years afterwards. What was going on, they was just reading newspapers and talking about it on Sunday. And we started putting it together.

That's the way it was. Farther back we hadn't really paid much attention to it. I mean, they weren't--

Q: Was this a new preacher?

Horton: Yes, this was a new preacher. But even before that we were getting-- what do I want to say-- disinterested.

Q: You started what?

Horton: Oh, we started to inquire where the money was going that was being put into it, and we found that some of it was-- so we found out to our satisfaction-- was in uprisings in Africa and around different parts of the country. So we stayed home for a couple of years. We didn't-- I mean, to us that wasn't Christianity.

Q: Did you ever go back?

Horton: I'm a Jehovah's Witness now. That's about four or two years we didn't go to church. Then one day a couple of Witnesses-- don't know whether you want to hear this or not-- came to the door, and-- before we were married, we made up our mind that we'd try to be decent to people. That's one of the things we talked over. Well, a couple of Witnesses came to the door, and they'd been to our door many a time when we were in the Methodist Church. We took their literature. We really never read it. We weren't interested. We felt pretty secure. Everything was all right where we were and we weren't going to change. But two Witnesses came to the door after we'd stayed home a couple of years and one of them that came was a woman who used to go to the Methodist Church that I knew. So they

were very polite. I asked them in. One sat in that chair and one over the side there by the couch. And they stated their purpose. Left a book, a little blue book, and excused themselves and away they went. They came back in about a week, and I agreed to study the Bible with them. It made sense to me.

So then my wife got to be ill and I spent a lot of time with her. After she passed away I started studying with them again, and I was baptized in Montreal in '78.

Q: Do you then go around from door to door?

Horton: Oh, yes.

Q: Is there a church here?

Horton: There's a church in Harwich, East Harwich.

Q: I was wondering, because I didn't think there was one in Eastham.

Horton: It's growing in leaps and bounds.

Q: Is it really?

Horton: It's getting crowded now. It makes sense to me. They didn't force me into it. The Witnesses don't force you into it. They tell you how they interpret the Bible, the way they see it. You have to make your own decision. They don't ask you to make a decision. It's-- you're strictly on your own. They never asked me for a nickel. There are no collection plates. Everything is voluntary. And they always have plenty of money.

Horton: I feel that I have.

Q: Well, that's wonderful, after a whole lifetime.

Horton: It gives me a great hope that I never had in the Methodist Church. I mean, there's no question in my mind but that I'm going to meet my wife. They talk about the Resurrection. Very seldom heard in the Methodist Church.

Q: Well, it's a good thing you found them.

Horton: You know, my wife was against it. She started studying when I did with the Witnesses, and it came to the point where-- saluting the flag, and she said, "I taught my children twenty-one years to salute the flag. I'm going to think this over." Well, I kept studying. I went through the Truth Book.

After she passed-- well, the Witnesses used to call and they-- one of them said to me, Mrs. Horton is changing her attitude toward the Witnesses. She isn't so-- what do I want to say-- so against them. Just like I was all the years I was in the Methodist Church. And I said I noticed that too, but I don't say too much to her about it. She's got to make that decision herself.

And I know that if she was alive today, she'd be a Witness. She would be a good one, because after she takes a hold of anything, she really puts her heart and soul into it. Like teaching the 4-H Club and teaching-- she used to stay after school at nights and teach the children, the ones that needed extra help.

Q: Were either of you involved in town politics or town government?

Horton: Very little.

Q: You didn't hold any offices?

Horton: No.

Q: Or were on committees?

Horton: Yes, I was on the committees in the National Seashore and like that. But I didn't like it. I'm not a politician, I know that

Q: You say what you think, eh?

Horton: I know that. I despised politics. I mean, I wanted to keep away from it all I can.

Q: What about the National Seashore? Do you remember when that was set up and the reaction of the people?

Horton: Well, I went to the first meeting they had in the Town Hall, and there was all kinds of reaction pro and con, of course. And this is another thing. There was politics in that. I went to the first meeting. You find a lot of things happening now that they said wouldn't happen then.

Q: Like what?

Horton: Well, people that want to haunt you, they find ain't going to get crowded off the reservations, as you call it. And if you go to the Town Hall they probably have a whole list of it that you can go over. But there's lots of things that-- I sold



them a lot of property I had there by the Nauset Light area.

Q: Was that eminent domain?

Horton: No, I came to an agreement with them, without eminent domain.

Q: We've noticed that there are a lot of people whose property was taken by eminent domain, and then others were allowed to stay. And there were some who could sell like you did, under contract. How did that happen?

Horton: Well, people you can't do business with, they have the power of eminent domain. I mean, if you can't come to an agreement. That's the way I understand it. I came to an agreement with them. I feel as if they used me fairly. I think where a lot of people are making the mistake that have land to sell is that they want to get now what they think it's worth ten years from now. They figure on appreciation. Well, they aren't going to buy under those conditions. Would you buy under those conditions?

Q: Of course not.

Horton: If you're thinking of selling something now, what's the property worth now? That's your price, not what it's worth ten or fifteen years from now.

Q: Yes, it's a little matter of greed.

Horton: I think so. (Laughter)

Q: Do you think the National Seashore's been a good thing?

Horton: I think so, yes. Of course, in an enterprise like this, National Seashore, taking this land locating there they did, it's just like relocating a snake road. Some people are going to benefit, some are going to get hurt. I would say that the National Seashore had benefitted the Cape. That's my analysis.

Q: What remembrances do you have of the railroad?

Horton: Oh, I can remember going to Boston on it a good many times when I was young. And I remember going to a meeting that was held in Boston to see if they should continue the passenger service. You see, the passenger service was discontinued long before the freight service down here. And the first question that the moderator asked in the room was, "Those that came by train, stand up!" And they all came by automobile!

Q: No kidding?

Horton: You see, there was the answer right there, as far as the passenger service was concerned.

Q: Was the building of Route 6 almost simultaneous with the phasing out of the railroad? Did you still have railroad service after Six?

Horton: Yes. Oh, yes. We had railroad service after that, especially freight service, because as more cars came in, there was less passenger service. Why, we even used to go by train from here to Orleans.

Horton: There was a station down there by Samoset Road and there was one in North Eastham near the asphalt plant. And every little town had a railroad station. Some, two.

Q: Do you think there's a chance it might come back?

Horton: I don't think so.

Q: Was there a controversy over Route Six when it went in?

Horton: Not that I remember.

Q: Everybody thought it was a good idea?

Horton: Far as I know.

Q: How about where it was going to go?

Horton: Well, of course, that was really before my time. I mean, I was small when they first laid out Route Six. There was always a Route Six here, as far as I can remember. There was a road-- whether they called it Route Six or not-- but there was always a road in this general area.

Q: I'd sort of like to talk about the founders of the Historical Society. Do you remember Captain Sparrow?

Horton: Sure.

Q: What kind of man was he?

Horton: He was an excellent person and a good friend. He helped out a lot of people in Eastham. He was interested in the town.

And a lot of Eastham boys went to sea with him. And he ran a tight ship.

Q: What kind of ship was it?

Horton: A Merchant Marine.

Q: You mean he was a disciplinarian?

Horton: That's right. And he showed it walking down the street.

Q: In what way?

Horton: He exemplified it walking down the street.

Q: Military appearance?

Horton: If you've ever been in his home-- when he had it built-- I used to go see him once in a while. Everything in its place. Everything had to be right. He was a wonderful person and a good friend.

Q: And Bernie Collins?

Horton: ~~AdX~~ Well, of course I knew Bernie all my life. What can I say about him? I mean, people elected him Selectman. He held a lot of prominent positions. So I think that speaks for itself.

Q: I think so. And did you know Ralph Chase?

Horton: Oh, sure. Ralph Chase-- old buddy of mine. We was in the Boston police strike together. Another wonderful person.

Q: We were just ready to interview him the week before he went into the hospital, and I was sorry we didn't get him.

Horton: Ralph was a wonderful person. He was always willing to help people in need. And he did. He helped a lot of people. I can say actually-- I think I can say this with assurance-- that he helped bring up a lot of children in town from needy families. He was Number One!

Q: And Fred Jewell? He was another founder of the Historical Society.

Horton: Well-- of course, I hope Fred hears this. He's one of the newcomers, you know. (Laughter)

Q: I know.

Horton: That's right. But probably, if it wasn't for Fred Jewell, the Historical Society would never have got started. He's the one that championed the whole thing, got things going.

Q: He's an organizer.

Horton: He's the one that really got it going. He got the names of as many as he could who had been pupils of the schoolhouse there, you know, and I helped him do that. He was an organizer. He got it going.

Q: He's had quite an amazing life, I think.

Can we talk a bit about storms? Were you involved in any of

the big storms on the coast of the Cape?

(TAPE INTERRUPTION)

Q: We're going to talk about storms and the effect they have on the seacoast. Were you involved in any?

Horton: Well, you know, big storms-- when I was growing up we just didn't pay any attention to them. That seems odd to a lot of people. My father would go out and my older brothers would go out and would look around and see what the sky looked like, and they would say, Secure the barn door, or the henhouse doors or the shop doors or whatever it was. "The wind's gonna blow tonight," or "We're gonna have some rain," or something like that. We'd go to bed and forget about it. Fact is, now it takes quite a thunderstorm or a rainstorm to wake me up. We don't pay any attention to them.

The only storm that I remember was in '38, and that didn't hit this part of the Cape. How I remember it, I was going to the Springfield Fair, Eastern States Exposition, and we got held up because all the wires and things were down. We didn't get through.

Q: That was the big hurricane of '38 that swept up through New Hampshire and Vermont?

Horton: That's right.

Q: Have you had a hurricane that hit the Cape at all in your lifetime?

Horton: Not that I recall. I think in Falmouth they had what

they called a hurricane once and it did a lot of damage over there. Enough so we went over to see what it did.

Q: Well, also, of course, in '78, they had the big storm, when the Coast Guard Beach was taken out. I suppose that could qualify as just a big storm, not a hurricane.

Horton: Well, a lot of people today get all stirred up about something like that. To us old-timers it's a common event along the coast. Really you don't pay too much attention to it. You can't do anything about it.

Q: Not much.

Horton: What can you do about it? Of course, I suppose if you had a house sitting right on the edge of the beach-- overconcerned about it. But we take those-- oldtimers-- as common events. We didn't even bother to put it in the paper really. (Laughter) But it's these things here that keep people all stirred up. That, and that over there.

Q: What? What do you mean?

Horton: Radio. The radio and TV. If those people would keep still, 99 per cent of the people would go to bed and go to sleep. (Laughter) I mean, that's a personal view, of course.

Q: Right. Okay, now we're getting down to the end here. I've got the last two questions. Have you developed a philosophy of

life over the years? I think you've pretty well answered that.

Horton: Yes, I have. Matthew 22: 37 and 39.

Q: All right, what is it, for the record?

Horton: Love your God with all your heart and soul. Love your neighbor as thyself.

Q: Pretty good philosophy. Has it worked well for you?

Horton: Very good.

Q: Good. And if you had your life to live over again, would you change anything?

Horton: Well, there's only one thing that kind of bothers me, and I don't know how to change it and I don't know who does, and that's these atomic plants.

Q: You mean you're against them?

Horton: I don't know. They must have known they were going to have all this waste material. That's the problem they should solve before they build the plant. What/<sup>to</sup>do with this waste. You see what it's handing to the present generation. We're turning this stuff over to them that we don't know what to do with, and it's dangerous.

Q: You feel helpless about it?

Horton: That's right, and things that you're helpless about you



can't change. Some things you can't change. I don't know how to handle that. I don't know. I won't say I'm agin' 'em, I don't know whether I am or not. I certainly should be for them, if they could find some way to take care of this waste material from the factories. Everything connected with the atomic waste. It's dangerous stuff.

Q: You bet it is. Have you read the stories about the acid rain?

Horton: Stories-- I've read accounts of it now and then in different farm magazines I subscribe to. As far as changing things in my life, I wouldn't know what to change.

Q: You just liked it.

Horton: Well, as far as growing up in Eastham, I just loved it. I think it's beautiful. And there are no complaints.

Q: Good.

Horton: Yes. I have no complaints. I don't hold no grudges against ~~no~~ anybody. I hope they don't against me, but the chances are somebody does, but they haven't told me.

Q: There isn't anything you can control, that's the problem. Can you think of anything else, Mr. Horton, that we haven't covered? Anything you'd like to talk about? Concerning Eastham or your life here?

There's one question here. You want to know how I spent my vacations.  
Horton: Well, when we were young-- I had an automobile when I

was fairly young. Saved the money. Cost me three hundred and some-odd dollars, my first automobile. It was a little Ford, Model-T pickup, with a little box on the back. We used to go to the World Series ballgames in New York City and different places, when we were young. And my wife was a great sailor. She loved the water. We used to take trips, after we were married, of course, on these two- and three-masted schooners out of Maine. Be on them a week. And we loved the state of Maine. We traveled from one end to the other. We've been as far north as you can go in Maine, which is Fort Kent, and we've ~~g~~ been all along the coast, every little inlet, and there are a lot of them.

Q: On the schooners?

Horton: Where we could on the schooners. Of course, they can only go in certain ones. And then we'd go into every-- when we'd go by car, we'd take all them little towns, little villages down the coast. We just loved it.

Q: Did you ever think of moving there?

Horton: We would have been there by now if my wife had lived. We were just about ready to buy a place in Camden, Maine. Yes, we were almost ready to buy it. You know, if she-- if her illness had been a year later, we would have been in Maine.

Q: Why didn't you move there before?

Horton: Well, of course, we had the cottages here. We had to

dispose of them. And we had the house across the street and the one over there and the one around the corner. We had to dispose of all that business before we could move. Well, I guess we went to Maine-- what? Ten years? Summers. Anywhere from two to three weeks.

Q: Did you ever go on a ship, the Regina Maris?

Horton: No. You mean out of Maine?

Q: Yes.

Horton: No. We went on the Victory Chimes, which is a three-masted schooner. There's a picture of her in there. And I have the award that they awarded us on the wall over there, for being good sailors. (Laughter) Everybody got them. (Laughter) And we've been on the Adventurer, the Rose . That's some of the schooners we've been on.

Q: Did you have a boat of your own?

Horton: No. No, nothing but a little rowboat down to Hemenway, that's all. Didn't have any sailboat or--

Q: What did you do, go out fishing in the marsh?

Horton: Oh yes, shellfishing. Like that, you know. All real Cape Codders go shellfishing.

Q: Of course. Flounder fishing too?

Horton: Oh, sure.

Q: Can you think of anything else? Did I overlook anything?

Horton: Not really.

Q: If you do, you know, you can always add it. Oh, I know one thing I want to ask you. Do you remember the campground meetings?

Horton: I can just barely remember those. /

Q: Were those Methodist?

Horton: Those were Methodist.

Q: They were? And they were connected with the church here.

Horton: You know there was another Methodist church in town that burned. Did you know that?

Q: I knew there was another one that burned. I thought it was this one and that this one had been rebuilt.

Horton: No. The one that burned was right down by the Evergreen Cemetery. Right across from Arnold's. Right in that area. Of course, where the church stood, they've sold it off into lots now, graded it and sold it off into lots. But that's where the Methodist Church was.

Q: Did you attend campground meetings? You remember?

Horton: As I remember it, I didn't really attend meetings, no.

THE END

us kids going over there and creating some deviltry. We didn't attend meetings. We created a little deviltry. (Laughter)

Q: Did you get punished?

Horton: Chances are we did. We didn't create the deviltry at the meetings. There were a few structures there that needed sort of demolishing and so forth, so we'd go in and knock a prop out that was all ready to fall down. I mean, I remember where the well used to be over there on the campgrounds. A well where they used to get the water.

Q: Where was that?

Horton: It was pretty well in the center of that area there. You know where the campground was?

Q: Wasn't it on Campground Road?

Horton: That's right. On the right of that, going down. That area there.

Q: Are some of those little houses the ones they used for meetings?

Horton: Oh, there's none of the houses. Those houses have all been built since. None of those houses are left there. They might have had one house, but the rest was more or less a camp, you know.

Q: Did they come all summer, or what was the story? Just a couple of weeks out of the summer?

I was a little shaver, small.

Q: Right. Do you have any idea how Thumpertown Road got its name?

Horton: No, and I can't find anybody that did.

Q: We put the question in the Newsletter, you know, and nobody has answered it.

Horton: No, I haven't any idea. I've heard that question asked quite a few times. I would guess that it was a place where trouble was going on all the time, of some kind or another. (Laughter)

Q: Somebody said it was because there were a lot of rabbits and they made a lot of noise thumping all the time, you know.

Horton: I think it would take more than that for them to name a road.

Horton: I would too. Well, thanks very much, Mr. Horton.

CCT 3/21/96

EHS  
364

PAGE  
**A-10**

## Clayton O. Horton, 94

Builder; donated land; served on many committees, clubs

CAPE COD TIMES

EASTHAM — Clayton O. Horton, 94, a native of Eastham and retired builder, died Tuesday at the Orleans Retirement and Convalescent Home, Orleans.

He was the husband of the late Virginia (Nickerson) Horton.

Mr. Horton was born and raised in North Eastham. He graduated from Orleans High School in 1918.



**HORTON**

Mr. Horton was a building contractor for 45 years and operated Flat Acres Farm in North Eastham. He owned and operated a grocery store and a roadside grocery stand in North Eastham many years ago, and operated Crest Hills Cottages in Eastham for 25 years.

Mr. Horton was also a licensed auctioneer for many years and worked as a cook at the Nauset Coast Guard station and for four years in the National Guard.

He donated three acres of land off of Route 6 to the town of Eastham for the tourist informa-

tion booth and 26 acres of land near Great Pond to the Eastham Recreation Committee. Mr. Horton also donated land for the Kingdom Hall of Eastham Jehovah's Witnesses.

He was the past president of the Men's Club of the Eastham Methodist Church; past master of the Eastham Grange No. 308; a charter member of the Eastham Historical Society and its first vice president; a charter member of the Orleans Lions Club and its first chaplain; a 45-year member of the Cape Cod Farm Bureau; a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall; and served with his wife as a 4-H Club leader.

Mr. Horton served on many town committees.

He recalled serving as bodyguard to then-Gov. Calvin Coolidge during the 1918 Boston police strike, and helping evacuate people from the Eastern States Exposition during the 1938 hurricane.

He enjoyed restoring old houses and was an avid gardener.

A funeral will be at 2 p.m. Saturday in the Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall, Eastham.

Burial will follow in Evergreen Cemetery, Eastham.

Memorial donations may be made to the Eastham Rescue Squad, Route 6A, Eastham, MA 02642.



Our Cottage

1928



1923



Virginia Hartson